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SUBJECT: ANGOLA: THE ROOSTER FLIES AGAIN AS UNITA ANNOUNCES
CANDIDATES FOR PARTY PRESIDENT

Classified By: Ambassador Cynthia Efird for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: On June 26th 2007, in front of a boisterous crowd of supporters, UNITA formally opened the campaign for party president and announced Isaias Samakuva and Abel Chivukuvuku as the two candidates. Though party insiders call the campaign "too close to call," all players stress that maintaining party unity and running a clean campaign are priorities as UNITA works to rehabilitate its image in advance of legislative elections. The campaign will conclude on July 15 during UNITA's 10th Party Congress. End summary.

12. (U) Hundreds of flag-waving, horn-blowing, drum-beating party members cheered on their favorite candidates as UNITA formally opened the 19-day campaign for party president. The two candidates, current party president Isaias Samakuva and Member of Parliament Abel Chivukuvuku, were greeted by their supporters with competing chants and rooster crows, a nod to the black rooster, the party's symbol. Other party presidential hopefuls Eduardo Chingunji, Pedro Gonzalves, and Joao Chiuviaca were ruled ineligible by the electoral commission for not meeting either minimum age or other candidacy requirements.

13. (U) Transparency and the democratic process were the day's catchphrases. Adalberto da Costa, UNITA Press Spokesman and head of the Congressional Organizing Committee, announced that the party will show Angolans by running a good, clean campaign that UNITA is the party to run the country in a transparent and democratic manner. The candidates were announced by Justino Pinto de Andrade, an academic and MPLA party member, who UNITA invited to head its Electoral Commission as an impartial observer. In a surprise move, da Costa announced that Samakuva would suspend his duties as party president for the duration of the campaign to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest or other ethical violations. Party vice-president Ernesto Mulato will take over for Samakuva.

14. (U) UNITA'S campaign organizers emphasized their efforts to give the candidates a level playing field. To underscore the transparency theme, names were drawn out of a clear glass bowl to determine the candidate's order on the ballot; Chivukuvuku's name and picture will appear first. Lengthy biographies were read for each candidate, and campaign organizers stressed that each candidate would be provided equal time in debates and official meetings with party members and delegates. The party provided \$20,000 USD in campaign financing and candidates are not allowed to accept campaign contributions, though they are allowed to expend personal funds. They were encouraged to make their own campaign materials, but must use party colors and are prohibited from using images that invoke their current positions. Candidates were cautioned that violence or defamation, by libel or slander, will not be tolerated, as "we are all brothers of the same family."

15. (C) On June 18, Adalberto da Costa privately told P/E

Chief that both Samakuva and Chivukuvuku have pledged to put party unity above personal ambitions in their run for the UNITA presidency. Chivukuvuku confirmed this to us earlier in June, adding that the 2003 Congress was so divisive that it hurt the party's stature and both candidates know that the party needs to come out of the Congress looking unified and strong if it is to have any chance to increase its mandate in Parliament. That said, Chivukuvuku was also very confident that he would come out the winner in the election, ticking off his support base by province and even municipality.

16. (C) Comment: The campaign and Congress are clearly seen by party leaders as the best opportunity to reinvigorate UNITA's image in advance of legislative elections generally expected in 2008. The fact that both candidates have pledged to close ranks behind the winner is a major change and is a tacit acknowledgement of the damage the Party suffered in the fall-out of its 2003 party congress. Though the race is currently too close to call, party insiders report that winds are blowing in favor of the charismatic and cosmopolitan Chivukuvuku. The overarching need for party unity and Samakuva's resonance in rural areas may, however, be his trump card for victory. End comment.
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